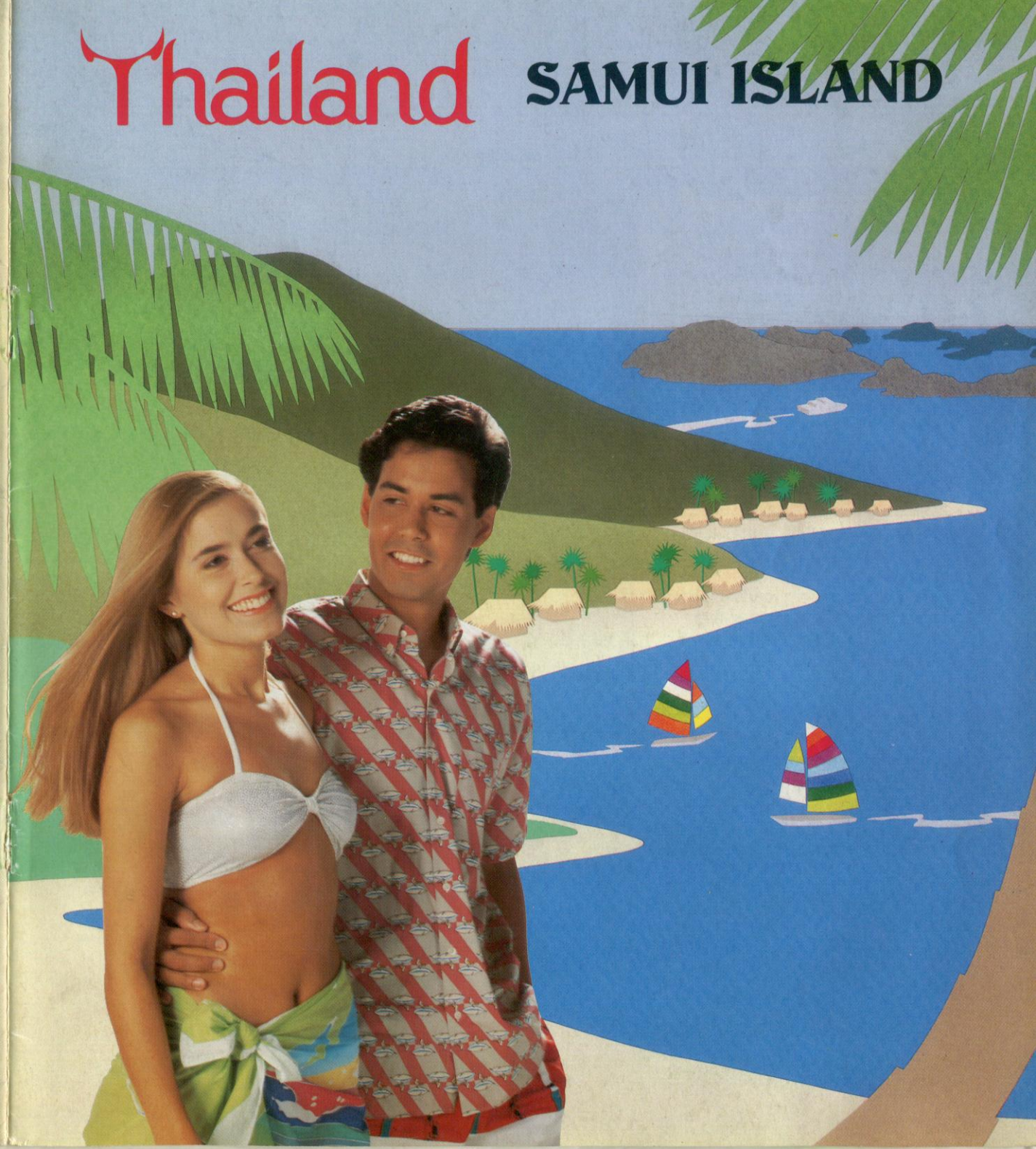


Thailand

SAMUI ISLAND



A full-page photograph of a tropical beach. In the foreground, there are dense palm trees. The middle ground shows a sandy beach with several palm trees leaning over it. In the background, there are blue mountains under a clear sky. The text 'IDYLLIC ISLE' is written in a large, stylized font at the top left, with colorful squares scattered around it.

IDYLLIC ISLE

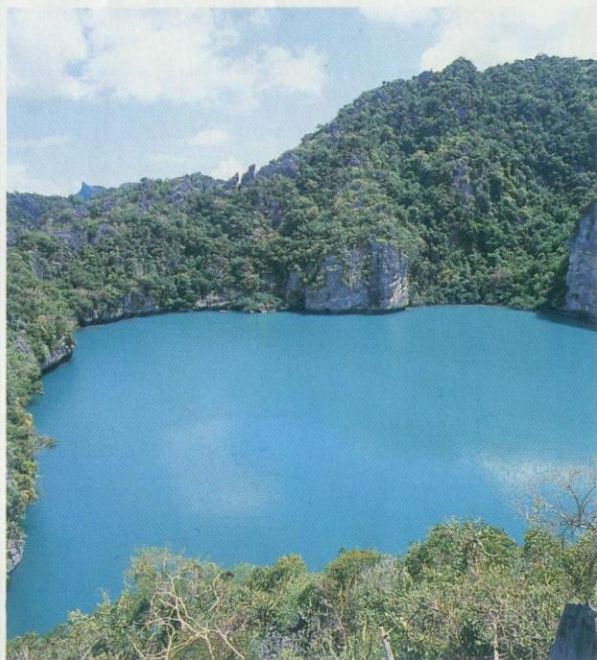
If variety is truly the spice of life, Thailand ensures the most exciting holidays possible. Not only does it feature beach resorts amongst its myriad attractions, it also offers a widely differing choice of beach locations. Among these Samui Island is a rare gem.

Whereas Pattaya blends the city with the seaside and Phuket adds luxury comforts to natural beauty, Samui preserves the idyllic simplicity of a tropical hideaway. It is characterized by almost deserted beaches of powdery white sand, crystal-clear waters and a hinterland of fresh green coconut plantations and rice paddies. Here you can delight in a latter-day Robinson Crusoe experience -- in comfort.





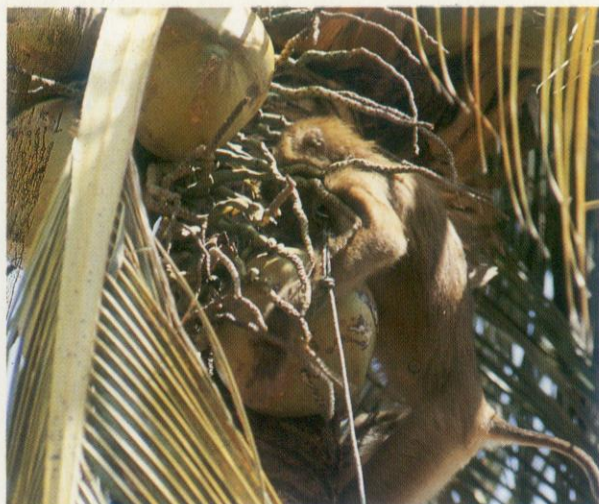
The true delight of Ko Samui is a lazy time on the beach



Ang Thong Marine National Park



Thatched beachside bungalows are the typical form of accommodation



A monkey helps harvest coconuts



Chak Phra Festival



A refreshing drink

AWAY FROM IT ALL

Ko Samui (the full name, with *ko* meaning "island" in Thai) is located some 80 kilometres off the coast of Surat Thani, about 560 kilometres from Bangkok. It is part of a true island world being just one of a group of more than 80 tropical islands, only four of which are inhabited.

Ko Samui has its own airport with direct flights from Bangkok. Access is by ferry boat from Surat Thani which can be reached from both Bangkok and the main southern town of Hat Yai by plane, train or tour bus. So Ko Samui remains very much away from it all, complete unto itself as it has been for centuries.



Ko Samui is reach by ferry boat from Surat Thani



Exploring by longtail boat

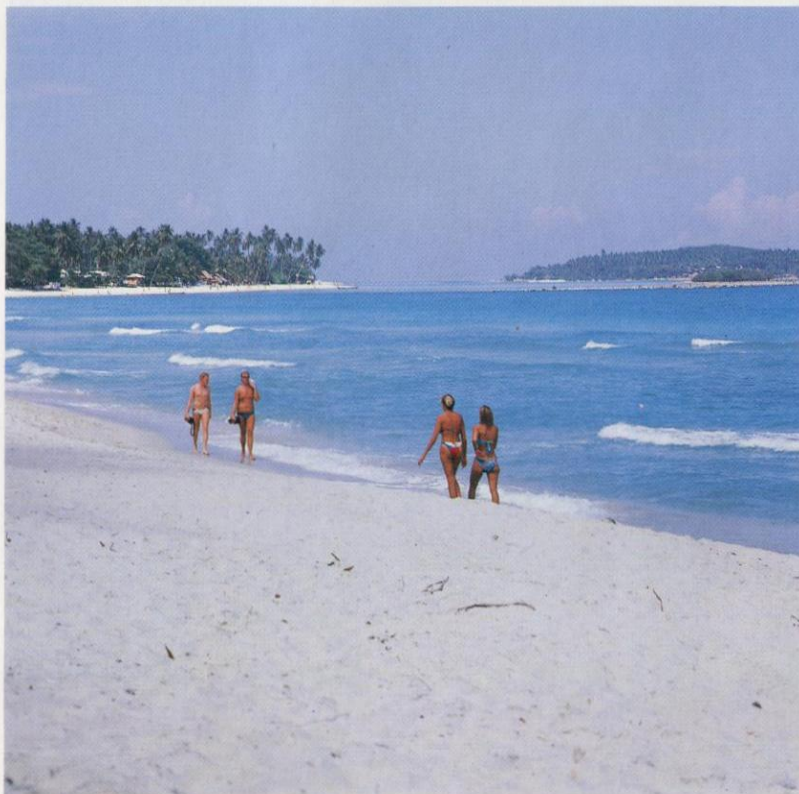


Sailboat are richly available

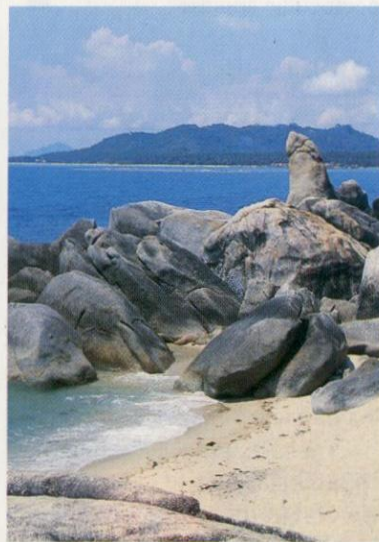
The island, Thailand's third largest, measures 21 kilometres at its widest point and 25 kilometres in maximum length. A mountain ridge runs east to west and most of the hinterland comprises forested hills. The rich hues of wild vegetation are dappled throughout with the contrasting greens of coconut palms and emerald paddy. Indeed, besides fishing, cultivation of coconuts is the main source of livelihood for the islanders and Ko Samui ships some two million nuts a month to Bangkok -- they are reputedly the best in the country.



The perfect island hideaway



Beaches are plentiful, people are few



Scenic variety

Sometimes trained monkeys are employed to help harvest the coconut and these nimble creatures provide endless entertainment as they go about their work.

SUNRISE BEACHES

Against the backdrop of green hills, the shore line of Ko Samui stands out as one of palm-fringed beaches and quiet coves and bays. Clean and uncluttered, the beaches are long, near-deserted strands of fine sand -- everyone's dream of a tropical island escape. The most popular spots are **Chaweng** and **Lamai**. Both are on the east coast where each day greets you with a spectacular sunrise.

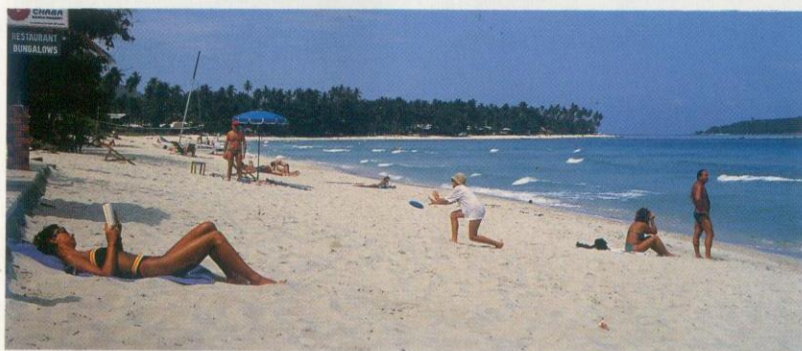


Windsurfing fun

In such an idyllic setting the temptation is simply to laze peacefully on the beach and soak up a tropical sun tan. But if you want more there are amenities for watersports, such as windsurfing and snorkeling. The coastal waters are exciting to explore and are especially rich in shoals of brightly coloured fish and exotic coral formations.



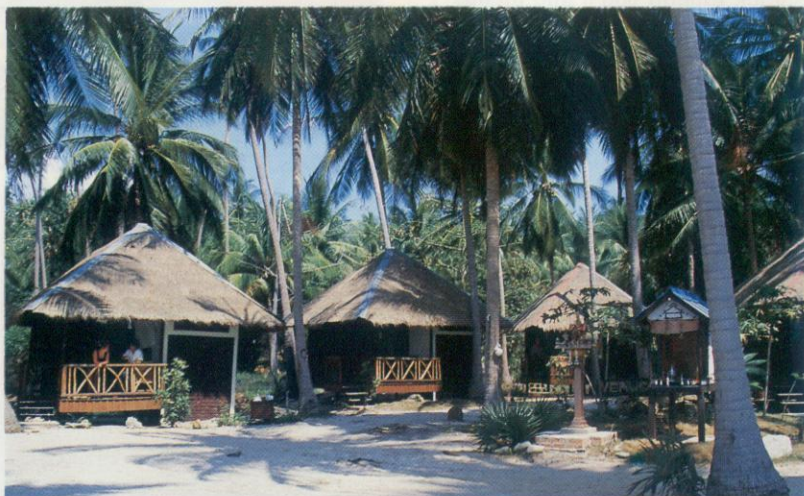
White sand and a deep blue sea



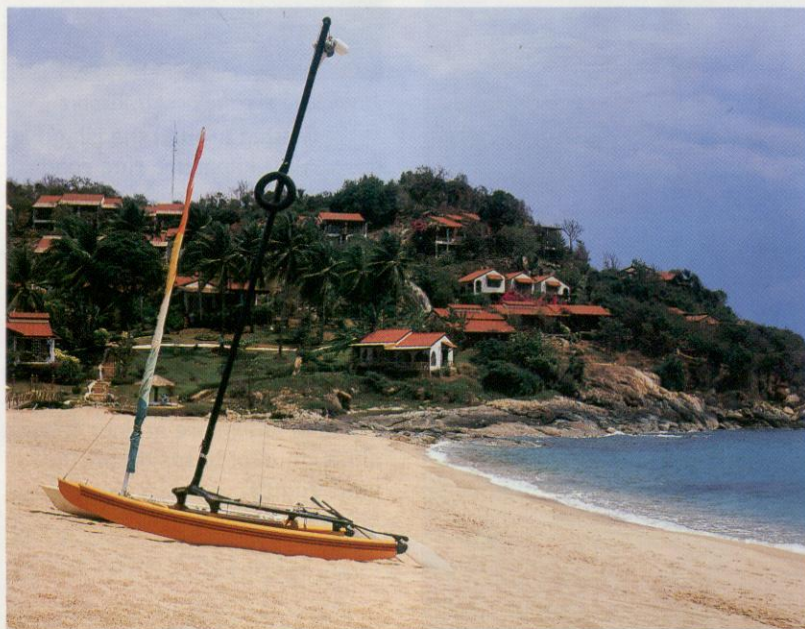
Relaxing in the sun

EASE & COMFORT

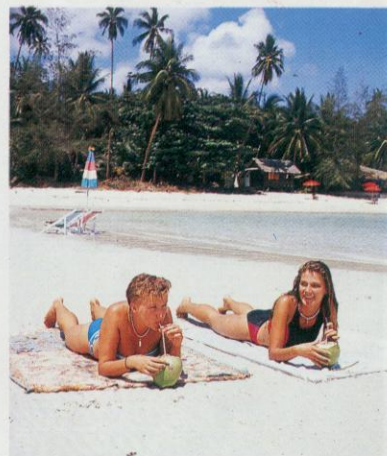
Although there are a few first-class hotels, Ko Samui's typical form of accommodation is the beach bungalow. Usually palm-thatched and commanding uninterrupted views of the beach and sea beyond, bungalows offer good, simple facilities, with or without airconditioning. You are assured of all basic comforts and yet the amenities we all appreciate do not detract from the easy-going Robinson Crusoe feel of an island retreat.



Bungalows provide simple but comfortable accommodation

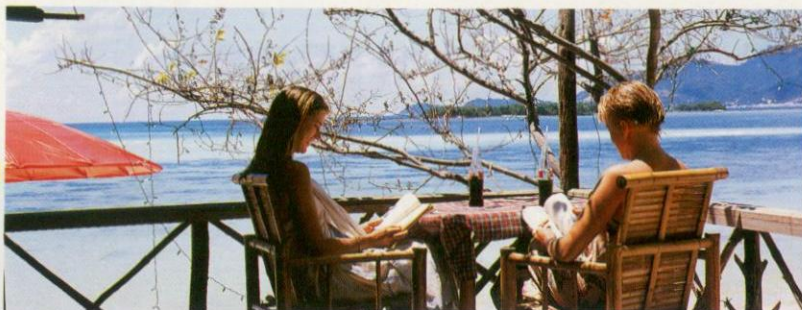


One of Ko Samui's most delightful resorts

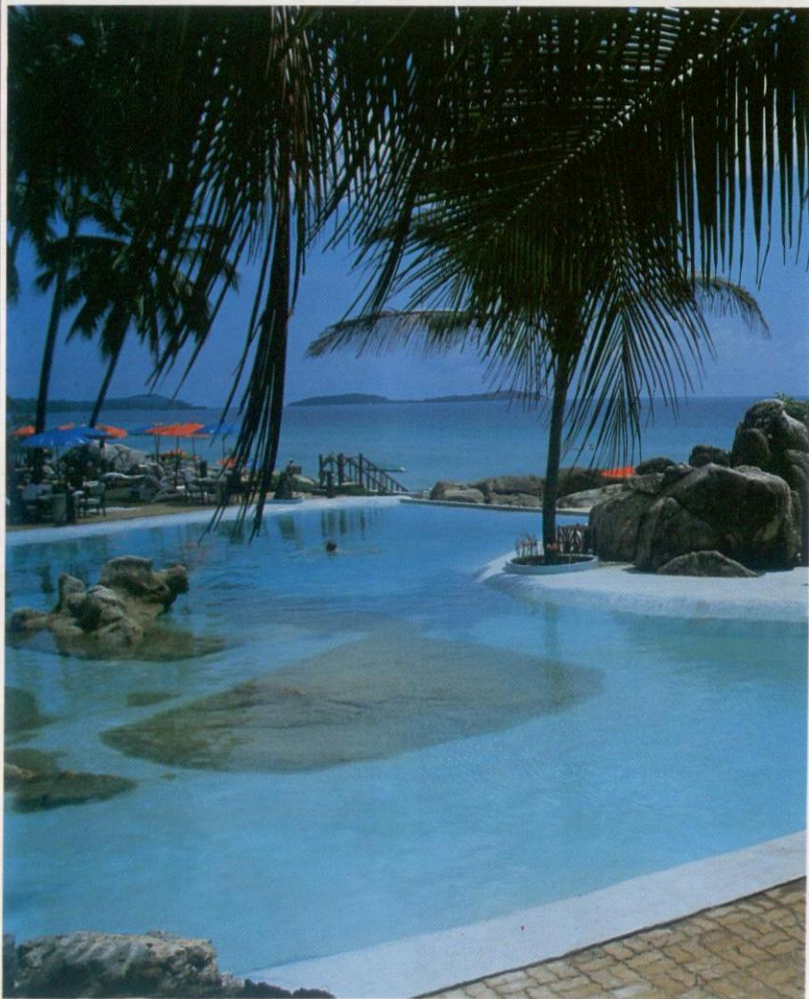


An easy time

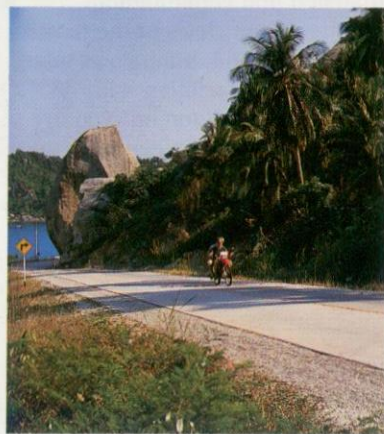
Most beach bungalows have their own restaurants, while other small establishments are common. Fresh seafood and tropical fruits are the natural specialities of Ko Samui, though you'll find menus sufficiently varied to cater to all tastes. International favourites as well as spicy Thai dishes are available.



Bungalows look out directly on to the sea



Resorts add to the island's natural beauty



Motorbike are the best transport

Getting around the island is easy. A 50-kilometre ring road skirts the coast, giving ready access to all beaches and the little administrative centre of Na Thon, a compact beachside huddle of houses, shops, restaurants and small hotels. The best form of transport is a motorbike which can be readily hired. This gives the freedom to explore at your leisure, although mini buses do ply the main routes.

BEYOND THE BEACH

A complete escape in the tranquil world of an idyllic beach resort is, of course, Ko Samui's main attraction, but the island is not without sightseeing and excursion possibilities.

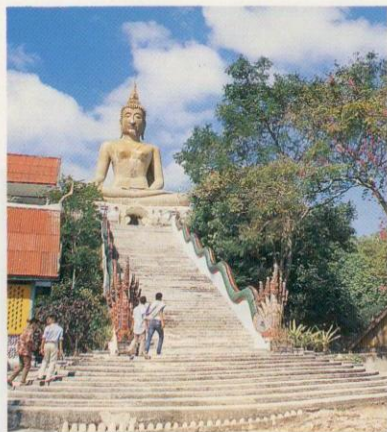


Exploring inland

Principal among the natural sights are two picturesque waterfalls. **Hin Lat**, close to the town, cascades over several levels and has a pool at its base which is ideal for fresh-water swimming. Rather more scenic is **Na Muang Waterfall** on the eastern side of the island. It is impressive with a wide drop of 30 metres and also has a sandy-bottom pool at its base where you can swim.



The picturesque in Hin Lat Waterfalls



Wat Hin Ngu

On neighbouring **Ko Fan**, connected to Samui by a causeway, is the temple of **Wat Hin Ngu**. Here there is a large statue of the seated Buddha, imposingly sited on a hillock and dominating the skyline, looking especially awe-inspiring at sunset. Attached to the temple is a meditation centre which offers tuition to Thais and foreigners.

For an insight into the island's past, the small "**Cultural Hall**" at the Lamai village temple compound has some fascinating exhibits. Agricultural implements, Buddhist scriptures and various items brought by Chinese traders in the 19th century are all interesting indications of the cultural influences that have moulded Samui.



The huge Buddha statue at Wat Hin Ngu is a local landmark



Preparing one of the contestants for a buffalo fight



Coconuts are Ho Samui's most famous export

An occasional attraction is Samui's favourite sport of **buffalo fighting**, an exciting tussle between two animals. Contests, held at several sites on the island, are to be seen on festival days such as Chinese New Year and Songkran, the traditional Thai New Year in April.

Complementing the sights and the unspoilt natural beauty of the landscape are the islanders themselves. Mostly fishermen and coconut farmers, they pursue a lifestyle largely unchanged for centuries. Self-sufficient and used to an easy and peaceful life, they are friendly people and help make the island a place apart, a true escape into a tropical paradise.



A tranquil fishing village

ISLAND EXCURSIONS

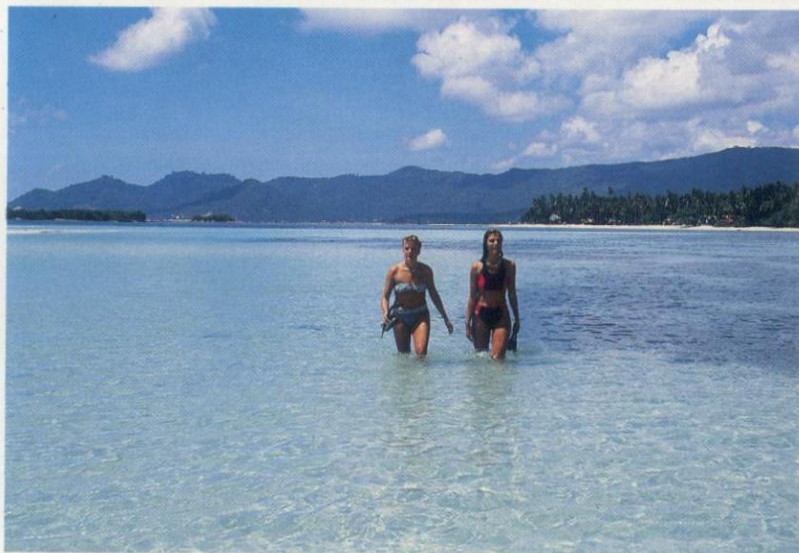
Should you want a little more activity than simply swimming, windsurfing and sunbathing, the other islands in the archipelago beckon. You can easily hire a boat for a trip to **Ko Pha Ngan**, the nearest and largest island next to Samui, which has some economy class bungalows. The beaches are good and there are also several scenic waterfalls. Close by and accessible on day trips by boat are two smaller, uninhabited islands, **Ko Tao** and **Ko Nang Yuan**, where beautiful bays with colourful coral formations offer excellent conditions for snorkeling.



There are plenty of islands to explore



Tour boat



The shallow water are ideal for snorkeling



The island world of Ang Thong



Taking a cruise to the outer islands

A more adventurous full-day excursion can be made to **Ang Thong Marine National Park**, a group of 40 islands northwest of Samui. Here you will see spectacular limestone formations, caves, blue lagoons and amazingly beautiful beaches. On **Ko Wua Ta Lap**, where the park headquarters are located, there are bungalows for rent. Organized daily tours to Ang Thong are available from travel agents in town on Samui.

MAINLAND SIGHTS

Either on your outward or return journey, it is worthwhile to spend a little time in Surat Thani, the mainland hopping-off point for Ko Samui. This bustling fishing and ship-building centre is picturesquely located and has a distinct charm. A casual stroll around town or a canal tour on the Tapi river are rewarding for the glimpses they give of southern culture. Surat Thani is also famous for its oyster farms, harvesting a giant species of the mollusc.



Typical fishing boat



Monks at Wat Suan Mok



Aerial view of Surat Thani and Tapi River

More specifically for the serious sightseer, **Chaiya**, about a 45-minute drive north of the town, is a major historical site. Its importance stems from the fact that some scholars contend that it was here that the ancient Srivijaya kingdom had its capital

Whatever the merits of the claim and despite the fact that little remains to attest to the glories of Srivijaya, Chaiya does boast some ancient temples of note. **Wat Phra Boromathat Chaiya**, a highly revered temple, has a *chedi* believed to be more than 1,300 years old, while **Wat Wiang**, **Wat Long** and **Wat Kaeo** are also worth visiting.



Tree-top living



Ornate chedi at Wat Phra Boromathat Chaiya

A few kilometres west of Chaiya is **Wat Suan Mok**, "Monastery of Flowing Water" which is a tranquil meditation centre for both Thais and foreigners set amid a peaceful natural park.

The picturesque **Khao Sok National Park**, about 100 kilometres west of Surat Thani, is another notable attraction. The area is rich in flora and fauna and basic bungalow accommodation is available. Alternatively, there is a "tree top" guesthouse near by.



Delicious seafood is a special treat



Catch of the day



A long deserted beach at Chumphon



■ Travelling further afield, Chumphon lies some 195 kilometres north of Surat Thani on a picturesque stretch of coastline. The town's fishing port of **Pak Nam Chumphon** is the hopping off point for excursions to several offshore islands. Some of these are famous sources of the edible bird's nests so highly prized by Chinese gourmets, and access is limited. But there are several other islands, such as **Mattra, Ngam Yai** and **Ngam Noi** which can be easily reached and where conditions for scuba diving are good. ■

Ko Samui affords the ideal beach escape and presents an island world of rare beauty and charm. At the same time, there is a surprising variety of attractions to be included as you explore the Gulf of Siam.



An exotic bunch of Chumphon



Ngam Noi Island

SAMUI ISLAND



BEACH

Chumphon : Sai Ri Beach

Phangan Island : Rin Beach, Si Thanu Beach, Thong Nai Pan Beach



BEACH & COCONUT PLANTATION

Samui Island : Chaweng Beach, Lamai Beach, Ao Bang Rak Beach, Bau Bo Phut Beach, Ao Thong Takluan Beach, Na Thon Beach, Thong Yang Beach, Mae Nam Beach



ISLAND & BEACH

Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park : Ko Wua Yai, Ko Na Phut, Ko Mae Ko, Mu Ko Ang Thong, Ko Wua Talap, Ko Phai Luak, Ko Phaluai, Ko Som, Ko Nok Taphao



ROCK FORMATION

Samui Island : Nang Yuan Island, Lamai Cape



LAKES & RESERVOIRS

Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park : Thale Nai (saltwater lake) at Ko Mae Ko



WATERFALL

Samui Island : Na Muang Waterfalls (Pha Luang Forest Park), Hin Lat Waterfalls

Phangan Island : Than Sadet Waterfalls, Phaeng Waterfalls (Forest Park), Chom Thong Waterfalls

Nakhon Si Thammarat : Phromlok Waterfalls (Khao Luang National Park), Karom Waterfalls



NATIONAL PARKS & OTHER RESERVES

Surat Thani : Khao Sok National Park (forest, wildlife, waterfalls), Nong Thung Thong Wildlife Reserve (birds)

Nakhon Si Thammarat : Khao Luang National Park (Phromlok Waterfalls)



MONKEY

Surat Thani : Monkey Training School



TEMPLE

Surat Thani : Wat Suan Mookkaphalaram (meditation) Phra Borommathat Chaiya (more than 1,200-year-old pagoda)

Nakhon Si Thammarat : Wat Phra Maha That



ARTS & CRAFTS

Surat Thani : Phumriang silk cloth, jute hat
Nakhon Si Thammarat : neiloware, yan liphao weaving, leather shadow-play figure



CULTURE

Samui Island : Lamai Cultural Hall



EVENTS

Surat Thani : Rambutan Fair (August), Chak Phra Festival (October)

Nakhon Si Thammarat : Hae Pha Khun That (February) Festival of the Tenth Lunar Month (September - October)

TO PRACHUAP KHITHI KHAN

SAMUI ISLAND



AIR PORT

CITY

MAJOR CITY

RAIL ROAD

ROAD

Bangkok

GULF OF THAILAND

CHUMPHON

RANONG

ANG THONG
NATIONAL PARK

PHANGAN ISLAND

SAMUI ISLAND

DON SAK
BAN DON

SURAT THANI

NAKHON SI
THAMMARAT

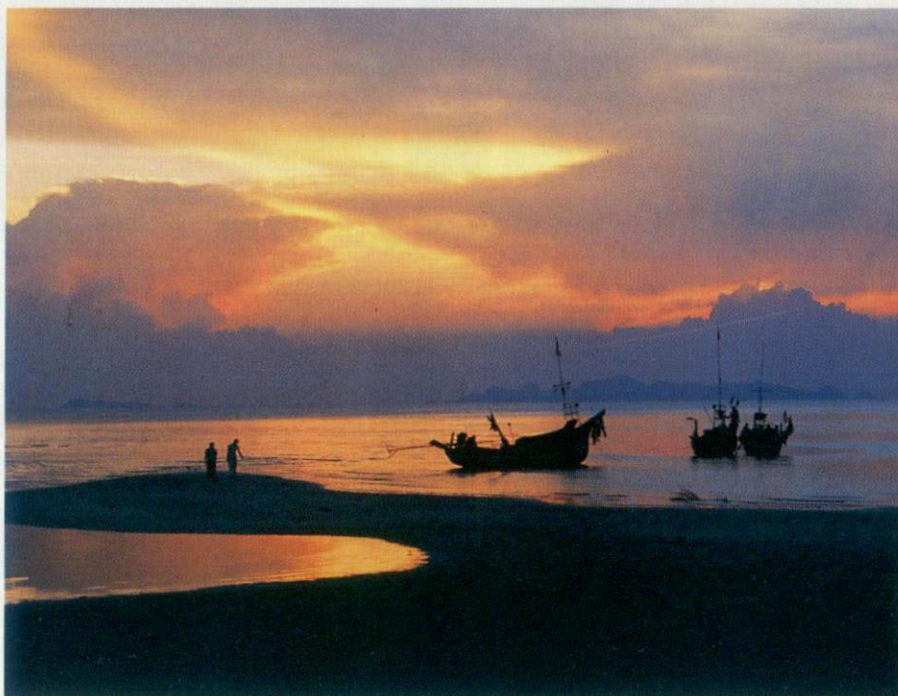
KRABI

TRANG

PHATTHALUNG

TO PHUKET





FURTHER INFORMATION

A variety of brochures, maps and additional information is available from the Tourism Authority of Thailand's counter at Bangkok airport, its head office at Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10100, or from its Surat Thani office at 5 Talat Mai Road, Ban Don, Surat Thani 84000.



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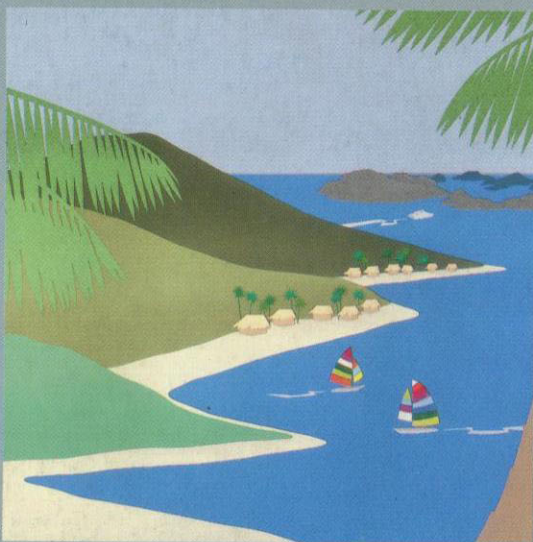
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